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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to: (1) identify the educational characteristics of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Undifferentiated Attention Deficit Disorder (UADD); and (2) to discuss the clinical implications of the current DSM-III-R diagnostic procedures of these disorders. Specifically, the differences in educational services provided to UADD and ADHD children were investigated. The sample consisted of 130 children (74 ADHD, 56 UADD) ranging in age from 6 years 10 months to 13 years 4 months. The results indicated that the educational characteristics of ADHO and UADD children, such as Learning Disability (LD) classroom placement and grade repetition, were surprisingly similar. Although ADHD and UADD children were differentially diagnosed, they received similar educational and medical interventions. Results also suggest the existence of a genetic aspect to ADD, and a need for reexploration of the use of separate diagnostic criteria for ADHD and UADD. Three tables present data and statistical analysis. (Author/RB)

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The Educational Differences Among ADHD and UADD Children

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to identify the educational characteristics of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Undifferentiated Attention Deficit Disorder (UADD) and to discuss the clinical implications of the current DSM-III-R diagnostic procedures of these disorders. Specifically, the differences in educational services provided to UADD and ADHD children were investigated. The sample consisted of 130 children (74 ADHD, 56 UADD) ranging in age from 6 years, 10 months to 13 years, 4 months. The results indicated that the educational characteristics of ADHD and UADD children, such as Learning Disability (LD) classroom placement and grade repetition, were surprisingly similar. Although ADHD and UADD children were differentially diagnosed, they received similar educational and medical interventions.

Study Objectives

The primary objective of the present study was to identify the educational characteristics of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Undifferentiated Attention Deficit Disorder (UADD). In addition, whether children with ADHD or UADD received different education and/or medical services due to being differentially diagnosed was addressed. The study also focused upon the similarities and differences of ADHD and UADD children within the educational setting.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 130 children (74 ADHD, 56 UADD) ranging in age from 6 years, 10 months to 13 years, 4 months. The subjects came from two suburban public school districts near a large southwestern city. The average age for the ADHD group was 115.68 months (SD=18.87) and 124.75 months (SD=17.03) for the UADD group. The children had been previously diagnosed as either ADHD or UADD by a licensed psychologist, physician, or psychiatrist based upon DSM-III-R criteria.

Instrumentation

An Educational Information Questionnaire was developed to assess the educational services, treatment efforts, and family history of ADHD and UADD children. The questionnaire consisted of eleven items including questions regarding age of diagnosis, presence/effectiveness of medication, family diagnosis of ADD, and educational services received. The questionnaire was completed by the mother of a child with a previous diagnosis of either ADHD or UADD. Services such as grade repetition, Learning Disability (LD) placement, gifted program inclusion, etc. were included in the survey.

Procedure

The Educational Information Questionnaire was mailed to 600 parents with 265 usable scales returned. Before mailing the questionnaire to parents, children were identified as ADHD, UADD, or normal. The ADHD and UADD children were differentially diagnosed, based on the criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders-III-Revised (American Psychiatric Association, 1987), by physicians and licensed psychologists and verified by the investigators through school health and testing records. Children diagnosed with other medical problems (e.g., Tourettes, seizures, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, etc.) were excluded from the study. Also excluded were children who were adopted, children whose parents gave more than one answer to a given question, and children with an ADHD or UADD diagnosis that could not be verified by a physician and/or licensed psychologist.

Results

The results indicated that there were few differences between the ADHD and UADD groups. When parents were asked if their child was receiving medication, 99% of the children with ADHD and 100% of the UADD children were receiving drug therapy. This suggests that physicians, although making a differential diagnosis between ADHD and UADD, treat the two groups similarly. The perceived effectiveness of the medication for each group was similar, 96% of the parents from each group indicated that it was helpful. Proportionally, both groups had similar occurrences of siblings and immediate relatives diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) based upon DSM-IV criteria. Grade repetition was high among both groups, with 43% of the ADHD and 43% of the UADD children having repeated grades. Few subjects of either group indicated Occupational Therapy services, gifted placement, or counseling services. Only 30% of ADHD and 30% of UADD children had received LD services. Interestingly, when it was

recommended to the parents that their child receive some type of educational services, 9% of the UADD children (62% did not complete the item) and 8% of the ADHD children (61% did not complete the item) had not received them. One difference between the two groups was that the ADHD group was diagnosed at a younger age compared to the UADD group. The mean age at the time of the diagnosis for the ADHD group was 73.32 months while the UADD mean age was 87.46 months.

Outcomes

* The results of this study revealed that the educational characteristics of ADHD and UADD children were similar in many respects.
* The use of medication, the effectiveness of the medication, sibling/relative diagnosis of ADD, and educational services received were alike for both groups.
* The results suggest that, regardless of a diagnosis of ADHD or UADD, the children received similar treatments, interventions, and services.
* The high rate of immediate relatives and siblings diagnosed with ADD suggests a genetic aspect to ADD.
* The results point to the need to reexplore the use of separate diagnostic criteria for ADHD and UADD. For example, ADD might be conceptualized better within a continuum with ADHD at one end and UADD at the other.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of
ADHD and UADD Children

	ADHD (n=74)	UADD (n= 56)
Mean Age (in months)	115.68 (Range 82-160)	124.75 (Range 91-157)
Gender	Male 85% Female 15%	Male 86% Female 14%
SES		
Major Professionals	1 14%	1 13%
Lessor Professionals	2 5%	2 13%
Administrative	3 31%	3 20%
Clerical, Sales	4 15%	4 29%
Skilled	5 22%	5 18%
Semiskilled	6 12%	6 7%
Unskilled	7 1%	7 less than 1%

Table 2

Educational Information of ADHD and UADD
Children From Questionnaire

Item Stem	ADHD (n=74)	UADD (n=56)
1. Has you child been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder:		
with hyperactivity	Yes 92% No 8%	Yes 7% No 93%
without hyperactivity	Yes 11% No 89%	Yes 93% No 7%
2. Age of child when diagnosed (mean age in months)	Group mean = 73 32	Group mean = 87 46
3. Is your child receiving/received medication for ADD?	Yes 99% No 1%	Yes 100% No 0%
4. Does the medication help?	Yes 96% No 3% Did not complete 1%	Yes 96% No 4%
5. Have other treatment/alternatives been used?	Yes 32% No 65% Did not complete 3%	Yes 20% No 79% Did not complete 1%
6. Are there any siblings with ADD?	Yes 20% No 77% Did not complete 3%	Yes 23% No 77%
7. Are there any immediate relatives (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) diagnosed with ADD?	Yes 22% No 74% Did not complete 4%	Yes 9% No 88% Did not complete 3%
8. Was there any relative that exhibited these types of behaviors even if there was not a diagnosis?	Yes 59% No 39% Did not complete 2%	Yes 63% No 29% Did not complete 8%
9. If your child has not received services, was it recommended that he/she should?	Yes 8% No 31% Did not complete 61%	Yes 9% No 29% Did not complete 62%

Table 3

Educational Services Received/Receiving by
ADHD and UADD Children

Service Received	ADHD (n=74)		UADD (n=56)	
Repeated a grade	Yes 43%	No 57%	Yes 43%	No 57%
Speech/Language Therapy	Yes 32%	No 68%	Yes 36%	No 64%
Gifted/Talented	Yes 5%	No 95%	Yes 9%	No 91%
Physical Therapy	Yes 7%	No 93%	Yes 4%	No 96%
Occupational Therapy	Yes 7%	No 93%	Yes 0%	No 100%
Counseling Services	Yes 23%	No 77%	Yes 27%	No 73%
ED: Emotionally Disturbed	Yes 1%	No 99%	Yes 0%	No 100%
EMH: Educable Mentally Handicapped	Yes 3%	No 97%	Yes 0%	No 100%
TMH: Trainable Mentally Handicapped	Yes 0%	No 100%	Yes 0%	No 100%
LD: Learning Disabilities	Yes 30%	No 70%	Yes 30%	No 70%
Remedial Reading	Yes 23%	No 77%	Yes 30%	No 70%
Remedial Math	Yes 4%	No 96%	Yes 9%	No 91%